

EXHIBIT F

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS**

STUDENTS FOR FAIR ADMISSIONS,)
INC.,)

Plaintiff,)

v.)

Case No. 1:20-cv-763

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN;)
JAMES B. MILLIKEN, Chancellor of the)
University of Texas System in his)
Official Capacity; STEVEN LESLIE,)
Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic)
Affairs of the University of Texas System)
in his Official Capacity; DANIEL H.)
SHARPHORN, Vice Chancellor and)
General Counsel of the University of Texas)
System in his Official Capacity;)
JAY HARTZELL, Interim President of the)
University of Texas at Austin in his)
Official Capacity; BOARD OF REGENTS)
OF THE TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY)
SYSTEM; DAVID J. BECK, CHRISTINA)
MELTON CRAIN, KEVIN P. ELTIFE, R.)
STEVEN HICKS, JODIE LEE JILES,)
JANIECE LONGORIA, NOLAN PEREZ,)
KELCY L. WARREN, AND JAMES C.)
“RAD” WEAVER, as Members of the Board)
) of Regents in Their Official Capacities;)
DANIEL JAFFE, Interim Executive Vice)
President and Provost; RACHELLE)
HERNANDEZ, Senior Vice Provost for)
Enrollment Management and Student)
Success; and MIGUEL WASIELEWSKI,)
Executive Director for Office of Admissions,))

Defendants.)

**Declaration of
Desiree Ortega-Santiago**

I, Desiree Ortega, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, declare the following:

1. The facts set forth in this declaration are based on my personal first-hand knowledge, and if called as a witness, I could and would competently testify to the following matters under oath.
2. I identify as Mexican-American and Puerto Rican-American and as a Latina.
3. I am currently a rising fourth-year student at the University of Texas at Austin (“UT”), studying Neuroscience and Mexican-American Studies with a pre-med focus and a certificate in Health Professional Spanish.
4. I am the first in my family to attend college and I am a non-traditional student. I initially attended community college beginning in August 2014 before transferring to UT in January 2016.
5. Race has shaped my experiences and my choices to attend college. Traditionally, Latinas are the primary caregivers at home while Latinos generate the household income. Therefore, it is statistically challenging for Latinas to pursue a college education, especially in a STEM setting. My mom originally planned to go to college. However, she got pregnant in high school and it was expected of her to focus on raising her child rather than go to college.
6. My racial identity intersects with where I grew up. Because the schools in my neighborhood of the South Side of Chicago were academically low-performing, my mother worked hard to pay for my tuition to a predominantly white private school so that I could increase my chances of attending college. When my mom had a chance at a better paying job, she relocated our family to live in a higher income area because the public schools were better funded. These schools were higher performing but also had a predominantly white student body. If I stayed in the area where I initially grew up, which was predominantly Latino, my chances of going to college would have been more limited due to the lack of resources and less access to better academic opportunities.

7. My family moved to a suburb in Houston when I was 12 years old. My zoned public high school in Houston was low-performing and predominantly students of color. The school had a variety of punitive policies, including a requirement that students pass through a metal detector to enter the school. My mom transferred me to a higher-performing public high school where I think we had to pay a fee to attend. While only 15 minutes away from my zoned school, my new school was predominantly white with families of higher socioeconomic status. School policies were less punitive, as students were not required to go through metal detectors.
8. In high school I practiced Tae Kwon Do, and I was a part of my school's choir. I earned my black belt in Tae Kwon Do, and every year of high school I made TMEA's All-Region Women's Choir. I was also a part of the Bank of America Student Leaders Program.
9. I was not in the top 7% of my graduating class. I did not take the SAT because I did not have the money to take the exam or to take a prep course. If I had known UT had a holistic admissions process, I would have applied. Instead I went to community college in San Antonio and Houston for about a year and a half. Even though my high school had a college counselor, the counselor did not provide the guidance that I needed, especially as a first-generation college student who is also Latina. For example, my guidance counselor did not know how to guide me through the Common App and would not advise me on how to apply to the schools I expressed interest in attending. I originally wanted to attend an Ivy League institution, but the counselor encouraged me to go to community college instead. She seemed to have lower expectations for minority students. As a result of poor advisement during the application process, and lack of prior knowledge of how the process worked, I did not initially apply to top tier schools and instead chose to attend community college for three semesters before transitioning to UT.
10. During my year at St. Phillips Community College in San Antonio, Texas, I participated in Girl Start, which was an initiative that encouraged girls to pursue careers in STEM. I was also a

Mathematics Student Representative, mentoring students from San Antonio public schools, participating in workshops with scientists, and attending a conference for women in STEM.

11. I applied to UT in Fall 2015. If UT had fewer Black, Latinx, and other students of color, I would have been less likely to consider transferring to the school. I wanted to attend a college that was racially diverse and had sufficient representation of underrepresented students of color.
12. I began attending UT in Spring 2016. During my time as a student at UT, I have excelled in academics and extracurricular activities. In addition to my demanding double-major and premed focus, I have participated in research throughout with the Children's Psychology Department, and the Health Leadership Apprentice Program at Dell Medical School. As a member of the Orange Jackets, I serve on the Recruitment Committee. I also helped organize a volunteer service-learning trip in McAllen, Texas focused on immigration policy. As an advocate for diversity and inclusion, I participate in the Hispanics in Psychiatry Early Pipeline Program, which is run by the American Psychiatric Association.
13. Being around students from diverse racial backgrounds at UT has improved my ability to empathize with others because the friends I made here were willing to share their experiences with me. I would not have these experiences if I went to a less diverse college. Meeting students from different backgrounds than mine made me become more aware of various social justice issues I was not aware of before. For example, in my courses that are discussion-based, I have formed friendships with students from different racial backgrounds who come to UT from different parts of Texas, the country, and the world. Through these interactions, I have learned to see the world through their eyes and experiences, not just through class materials. I have deepened my understanding of race, sexual identity, geographic migration patterns, and public policy by how the stories and experiences of my peers supplement and enhance the academic work we complete in our classes.

14. Interacting with students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds has also improved my learning, especially in my smaller seminar classes. In these classes, group discussion is encouraged so students from different racial backgrounds have the opportunity to share their thoughts and perspectives on the topic of discussion. For instance, I have spoken up in class to provide my perspective of what it's like to grow up in an inner-city neighborhood as Latina woman.
15. I have taken several Mexican-American and Latino Studies classes with predominantly Latinx students and professors. I feel more comfortable speaking up in those classes because I am with people who identify similarly to me even though our experiences can differ in various ways. For example, Latinx students differ in terms of how we were brought up, citizenship status, gender identity, sexual orientation, hometown, and language fluency among many other factors. The fact that we have different, though often overlapping, experiences helps to break down stereotypes about what it means to be Latinx. Making friends in the Latinx community at UT has helped me navigate my identity as a Latina.
16. I learned that resources for first generation college students have marginally improved over the past 20 years after I met a UT Latina alumna who graduated in 2000. I believe that these small, slow improvements have resulted from the advocacy of students of color on campus, which has increased over the years due to both the top 10% program and UT's race-conscious policy in holistic admissions.
17. I struggle with mental health issues and am a survivor of abusive relationships. Processing this trauma has been challenging given the level of isolation that I often feel on UT's campus as a low-income, Latina, non-traditional and first generation student. The intersectional nature of these issues has influenced my academic success. I feel like the academic culture at UT currently does not provide sufficient support for students of color who are often navigating

difficult and painful experiences that are impacted by race, class, and gender. For instance, I struggled with managing coursework and working part-time because no one else in my family has been to college so I had to figure it out when I got here. When I tell that to my professors, they do not consider all of my identities. Some professors tell me to figure it out, drop out of UT, transfer to an “easier” major, or change my career choice. Professors who have listened to my needs are either professors of color or are culturally competent and able to empathize with my identities. I have also had to rely on other students of color at UT to support me by providing me with the encouragement, empathy, and advice that I need to continue to succeed in my coursework.

18. Having other students of color on campus has also been important for me to recover and regain confidence during incidents that make me feel unwelcome on campus. For example, the Young Conservatives of Texas (YCT) often organize events that promote the idea that undocumented students do not deserve in-state tuition for college, spreading the idea that undocumented students should be shut out from higher education. These exclusionary arguments often target the Latinx community. YCT has also organized “affirmative action” bake sales, that imply that students of color, including Latinx students, do not have to work as hard for educational opportunities. YCT’s programming heightens my feelings of alienation at UT, but I am able to regain my sense of belonging by finding camaraderie among other students of color who similarly feel targeted. Together, we process our experiences, support each other, and regenerate the self-assurance needed to navigate racially-charged episodes and participate fully in our coursework and campus activities. Formal and informal networks of students of color are critical for my success at UT. These networks allow me to share my perspective which helps to break down the stereotypes that drive YCT’s understanding of affirmative action and other social policies.

19. UT could benefit from having even greater representation of students of color on campus, particularly more Black students. Black students at UT often lead initiatives that improve the racial climate for all students of color, including Latinx students like me. My Black classmates and colleagues have shared perspectives that have improved my ability to navigate the STEM field as a woman of color, and taught me more about coalition-building strategies for effectuating meaningful change. However, the current proportion of Black students at UT is extremely low: approximately 4%. Having a greater number of Black students at UT would greatly improve UT's educational environment for all students by increasing support networks, opportunities to learn across difference, and breaking down stereotypes.
20. Racial diversity and socioeconomic diversity are both important. They often intersect, but each has distinct benefits because skin color independently influences how we treat each other. My own experiences have taught me that people treat me differently because of my darker brown skin color, not just my socioeconomic status. Racial diversity is specifically needed to break down race-based barriers, end disparate treatment based on colorism, and develop greater cross-racial understanding.
21. Removing race as a factor in the admissions process is erasing me as a student at UT as well as other students whose race has affected their whole lives. UT should continue using race as a factor in admissions to not only maintain its diversity but also increase the number of students of color on campus.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed in Guadalupe County in the State of Texas on __11/03/2020__.

____/s/ Desiree Ortega____
Desiree Ortega